

Notes, Questions, Categories About Washing —Plus the Press Cor

By Jack Limpert

In 1964, Karl Meyer, a writer for the *Washington Post*, selected a power elite of Washington journalism for *Esquire* magazine. It was a good list for its time, and it provides a convenient jumping-off point for exploring today who has press power and how journalism is changing in Washington.

Meyer's article concentrated on the organizations important to Washington journalism, focusing mostly on the National Press Club and the Gridiron Club. The truth today is that none of the organizations is important: The National Press Club is a white-elephant luncheon club patronized by public-relations types and very few of Washington's top journalists; the Gridiron Club membership of the so-called 50 top reporters has more seniority and pomposity than quality.

One informal organization that does matter is Godfrey Sperling's breakfast group: Several times a week it brings together about two dozen of the city's best reporters and newsmakers like George Schultz, Hugh Scott, or George McGovern. Not as significant but more fun is the wryly named Political Writers for a Democratic Society, started by Jack Germond, Jules Witcover, and several other political reporters. It meets in the evening at someone's home and invites the political guest for dinner and drinks. The emphasis is on the drinks, and the night presidential candidate Ed Muskie appeared he displayed his fatal twin tendencies to drink too much and to lose his temper.

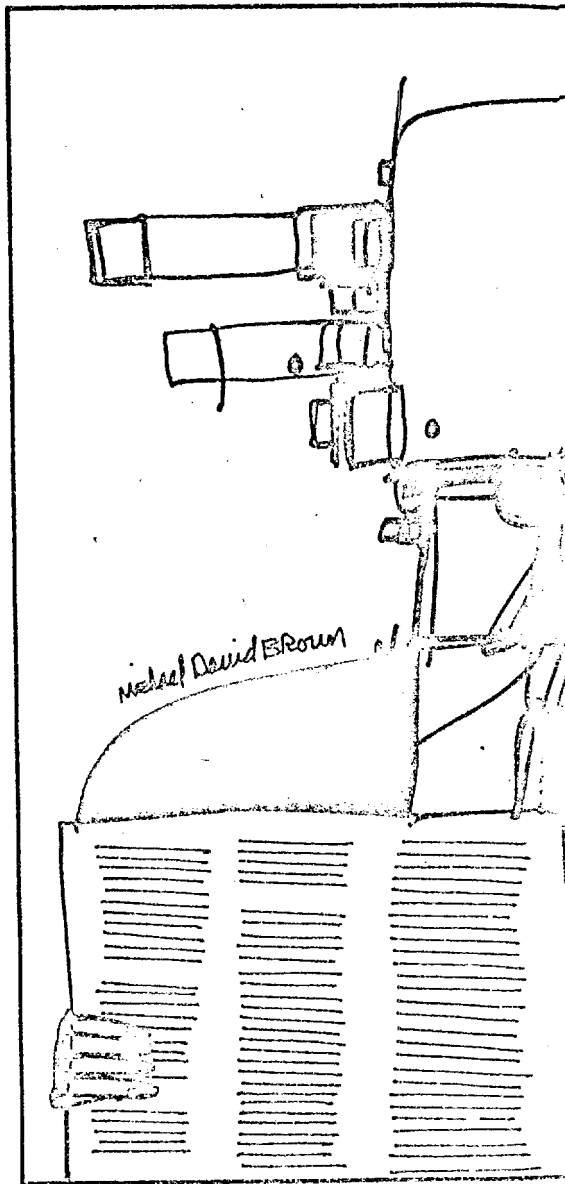
Otherwise, there really was not much insight or interest in Meyer's piece. In fact, when you ask Washington journalists if anything worthwhile has been written on the Washington press corps, you get mostly blank looks, with some references to articles by Ben Bagdikian or Jules Witcover in the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

So on to what was interesting in Meyer's article—his list of the 1964 Washington journalism power elite: J. Russell Wiggins, editor, *Washington Post*; Alfred Friendly, managing editor, *Washington Post*; Herblock, cartoonist, *Washington Post*; Benjamin McKelway, editorial chairman, *Evening Star*; Newbold Noyes, editor, *Evening Star*; Mary McGrory, columnist, *Evening Star*; Ben Beale, columnist, *Evening Star*; Tom Donnelly, columnist, *Daily News*; Arthur Krock,

commentator, *New York Times*; James Reston, chief Washington correspondent, *New York Times*; Walter Lippmann, columnist; Roscoe Drummond, columnist; Joseph Alsop, columnist; William S. White, columnist; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, columnists; Drew Pearson, columnist; Doris Fleeson, columnist; Marquis Childs, columnist; Marguerite Higgins, columnist; Charles Bartlett, columnist; Richard Wilson, columnist; John Herling, columnist; David Brinkley, anchorman, NBC-TV; Howard K. Smith, news analyst, ABC-TV; Edward P. Morgan, columnist and radio commentator; David Lawrence, columnist and editor, *U.S. News and World Report*; John Steele, bureau chief, *Time* magazine; Benjamin Bradlee, bureau chief, *Newsweek* magazine; Kenneth Crawford, columnist, *Newsweek* magazine; Richard Rovere, correspondent, *The New Yorker* magazine; Fletcher Knebel, correspondent, *Look* magazine; Stewart Alsop, Washington editor, *Saturday Evening Post*; Werner Imhoof, correspondent, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*; Henry Brandon, correspondent, *London Sunday Times*; Louis Heren, correspondent, *London Times*; Adalbert de Segonzac, correspondent, *France-Soir*; Jim Lucas, columnist and reporter, Scripps-Howard newspapers; Peter Lisagor, correspondent, *Chicago Daily News*; Sidney Hyman, free-lance writer; Richard Strout, columnist (TRB) in the *New Republic* and correspondent, *Christian Science Monitor*; Edwin Lahey, bureau chief, *Knight Newspapers*; Mark Watson, bureau chief, *Baltimore Sun*; Walter Trohan, bureau chief, *Chicago Tribune*; Robert Donovan, bureau chief, *Los Angeles Times*; Bascom Timmons, bureau chief, *Houston Chronicle* and other newspapers; and Allen Otten, reporter, *Wall Street Journal*.

The One-Eyed King

Today's journalism power elite is changed most dramatically by television; there now are eleven network television people on the list, compared to two in 1964: David Brinkley of NBC-TV and Howard K. Smith of ABC-TV. The other television personalities are the CBS-TV pundit, Eric Sevareid, who seemed livelier on radio but is



more powerful on television; Roger Mudd, considered by his peers the best television reporter in Washington and the heir apparent to CBS-TV anchorman Walter Cronkite; Dan Rather, the aggressive White House reporter for CBS-TV who eventually will end up as some network's anchorman; and Marvin Kalb, the smooth CBS-TV diplomatic correspondent who knows how to play the telephone with Henry Kissinger and then get the message across to the American people. Not so obvious: Bill Monroe, who brings Washington newsmakers onto NBC-TV's "Today Show," a program watched by thousands of the city's influentials over